

**Edmund Husserl: *Untersuchungen zur Urteilstheorie. Texte aus dem Nachlass (1893–1918)*, ed. Robin Rollinger**

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Edmund Husserl's philosophical maturation is so closely related to his aim of clarifying the concept of judgment that it can even be said that the various modalities of his phenomenology over the decades—psychognostic, logico-realist, transcendentalist—are merely different approaches to this phenomenon. Support for this exegetic idea can be found in the Hua XL, recently edited by Robin Rollinger. Two main merits make this volume particularly valuable: *first*, it affords access to writings that have not been published previously. These texts span the period from 1893 to 1918 (most of them stem from the convolute called “U-Blätter”) and document the profundity with which the author considered the problem. This profundity does not emerge in Husserl's publications. In fact, several topics discussed in Hua XL are either not investigated in such detail there, or are altogether absent, e.g., the phenomenology of hypothetic judgments (cf. pp. 1–30), the relations between logical and ontological laws (cf. pp. 162–175), or the interpretation of analytic judgments (cf. pp. 316–330). Furthermore, the manuscripts reflect Husserl's *discursive* train of thought. In them, results are achieved by chains of argumentation, not merely presented after the fact, according to an expository plan.

This last point directs us to the *second* merit of the volume: these collected manuscripts enable the reader to observe Husserl's philosophical thought evolving through time. In particular, she can detect the constancy of his interest in problems of judgment as well as variations in manner of approaching them. Thanks to such a multiplicity of perspectives Husserl was able to gain one of his most significant insights, namely, that the term “judgment” is equivocal and conceals a plurality of phenomena. More precisely, he does not simply recognize that this term refers to disparate items, he delivers a description of their mutual relations. One particularly perspicuous example of this is the notion of state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*), which Husserl begins to tackle in the first part of the volume (“Vorstudien zu den

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*Logischen Untersuchungen*,” cf. pp. 1–140) and which remains a constant theme of reflection in its second and last part (“Noetische und Noematische Untersuchungen (1908–1918),” cf. pp. 141–412).

In the first manuscripts (esp. in text no. 1 of 1893, and in text no. 2 of 1894) the state of affairs appears as a hybrid type of entity, which blends in itself psychognostic and logical characteristics. On the one hand, Husserl describes states of affairs in terms that recall Bernhard Bolzano’s theory of propositions-in-themselves (*Sätze an sich*): they are *truths* standing in relation of implication (*Folgebeziehung*) to each other (cf. p. 27). Accordingly, if the truth of *q* follows from the truth of *p*, the proper elements of such an entailment are the states of affairs that *p* and *q* denote, not the declarative sentences as such (cf. p. 95). On the other hand, Husserl characterizes states of affairs as elements that *belong* to different psychical experiences: “If I have the state of affairs in belief, then I have it as a foundation of belief. If I have it in presentation, then <I have it> as a foundation of presentation. Hence, ‘state of affairs’ is actually merely an abstractum. It is something common to different phenomena” (p. 49).<sup>1</sup> But with this, Husserl dissociates himself from Bolzano: propositions-in-themselves are qualified in the *Wissenschaftslehre* as ideal entities which are independent of consciousness. Here we can detect Husserl’s second source of inspiration at this stage of his reflection: the theory of judgmental contents that Carl Stumpf developed some years before. Not only did Stumpf baptize such *Urteilsinhalte* as “*Sachverhalte*,” he also described them as the proper correlates of the judgment, existing only immanently within consciousness. Moreover, even the notion of dependence employed in the quotation above can be traced back to Stumpf’s investigations regarding partial and independent contents (Stumpf 1873). The state of affairs is an abstract entity in Stumpf’s sense, since it is an essential element of a whole. *No* propositional experience can exist without its correlate and *no* state of affairs can exist without a corresponding experience. “The expression ‘that tomorrow is good weather’ refers to (presents) the content (this is the state of affairs) [...] Content is something conceptually common in all acts. Without content there is no act. [...] As there is no act without content, so there is no content without act” (p. 95f.).<sup>2</sup>

Such an unstable view of states of affairs rapidly evolves through the following years. In the manuscripts nos. 3 and 4 the distinction between ideal meanings and objectual correlates looms on the horizon. Indeed, in those texts we find that “[t]ruth is not a property of the state of affairs, but a property of the proposition” (p. 73)<sup>3</sup> and, more succinctly, “[t]ruth and state of affairs are not the same” (p. 83).<sup>4</sup> Thus, by the middle or end of the 1890s (i.e., the approximate dating of these

<sup>1</sup> All translations from Hua are my own. The German will be given in the footnotes. “Habe ich den Sachverhalt im Glauben, dann habe ich ihn als Grundlage des Glaubens. Habe ich ihn im bloßen Vorstellen, so <habe ich ihn> als Grundlage des Vorstellens. Also ‘Sachverhalt’ ist eigentlich nur ein Abstraktum. Es ist etwas vielen Phänomenen Gemeinsames.”

<sup>2</sup> “[...] Der Ausdruck ‘dass morgen schönes Wetter ist’ [...] bezeichnet (stellt vor) den Inhalt (das ist ja der Sachverhalt) [...]. Der Inhalt ist ein begrifflich Gemeinsames in allen Akten. Ohne Inhalt gibt es keinen Akt. [...] So wie kein Akt ohne Inhalt, so gibt es keinen Inhalt ohne Akt.”

<sup>3</sup> “Die Wahrheit ist nicht Beschaffenheit des Sachverhalts, sondern des Satzes.”

<sup>4</sup> “Wahrheit und Sachverhalt sind nicht dasselbe.”

manuscripts), Husserl had recognized some fundamental distinctions. We can summarize his new position as follows: states of affairs are now truth-makers and no longer truth-bearers, whereas propositions—acknowledged as the proper truth-bearers—are freed from any existential dependence on experiences. Propositions—as ideal entities—are logically related to states of affairs: they present—or refer to—states of affairs.

Several scholars have remarked that this semantic distinction is reminiscent of Gottlob Frege's distinction between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*, but such similarity must not be allowed to obscure the main differences between the positions. First, Frege does not subscribe to the existential assumption of state of affairs as the referent of declarative sentences. The referents of Fregean thoughts are truth-values. But more important, Husserl attempts to clarify how individual judgments-tokens can *touch* ideal entities such as meanings—a concern that neither Frege nor Bolzano share. Husserl dedicates extensive parts of his *Logical Investigations* to this problem, and its solution presupposes a phenomenological clarification of the notion of judgmental act. Being intentional, the judgment has an intentional content, and thus (according to the theory in the *Logical Investigations*) two mutually dependent elements constitute every individual judgment: the quality (of judgment) and the matter. Note that the non-independence that Husserl ascribed to states of affairs *tout court* in the previous texts (nos. 1 and 2) now characterizes intentional matters exclusively. States of affairs and propositional matters are now distinct elements, and moreover, both must be distinguished from logical propositions. First, the matter is a structural part of an experience, whereas the state of affairs is not. Second, we are able to intend states of affairs that do not exist (more precisely, do not *obtain* [*bestehen*], cf. p. 289, no. 5, p. 371). For instance, the sentence “Bucephalus is winged” expresses a judgment. Such a judgment essentially includes matter and is directed towards the non-existing state of affairs, being-winged of Bucephalus. Furthermore, this judgment has a meaning, i.e., it expresses an intersubjectively accessible proposition. But, once again, the matter is an individual part of an (individual) experience and so cannot coincide with a proposition. Husserl solves this problem by postulating that an ideal meaning is instantiated in the different intentional matters constituting the different judgment-tokens. He already starts to employ the notions of “concept” as (nominal) presentation *in specie* and of “proposition” as judgment *in specie* in the supplements to manuscript no. 4 (cf. pp. 98, 106, 114), and he consolidates them in the later texts—especially in text no. 7 (all of them written in the second half of the 1890s).

Now, if the logical level of propositions is detached from the ontological one of states of affairs—and if both are detached from the phenomenological level of intentional matters—the problem arises as to how one may differentiate which semantic elements of a sentence belong to meanings and which to states of affairs. For instance, *false positive* sentences are different from *true negative* ones and *true positive* sentences differ from *negative false* ones. We know already that truth is a property of propositions, one that is related to the subsistence of the corresponding states of affairs. But what about negation? Does negation affect propositions or states of affairs? We do not find a proper answer to this question in Husserl's

publications, but the fifth text of Hua XL makes a resolute statement about it: positive as well as negative states of affairs exist (cf. pp. 125–126). An analogous question concerns relations. Are saturated  $n > 1$ -place predicates to be settled at the level of propositions or at those of state of affairs? For Husserl, if  $a$  is similar to  $b$ , the similarity between  $a$  and  $b$  is nothing other than a state of affairs (cf. p. 82). This result is of crucial importance, since the reflection regarding relations and, in particular, converse relations, led Husserl to a new semantic conception.

According to the *Logical Investigations* (but cf. text no. 3, p. 89 already), converse judgments such as “ $a > b$ ” and “ $b < a$ ” are sentences expressing *two different* propositions which both refer to the *very same* state of affairs.<sup>5</sup> Husserl will improve upon this analysis at the beginning of a course held in 1908 (*Vorlesungen über Bedeutungslehre*, cf. Hua XXVI), when he recognizes that “ $a > b$ ” and “ $b < a$ ” do not merely differ with regard to their meanings, but even with regard to their objectual side: “On both sides we have different subjects and different predicates, so we have [...] different states of affairs, but the situation is the same” (Hua XXVI 29).<sup>6</sup> This remark is not a mere detail of Husserl’s theory of judgment but one of its fundamental aspects, since it allows him to introduce a more sophisticated conception of meaning. On the one hand, to speak of meaning is to speak of the proposition that my utterance of “ $a > b$ ” and your utterance of “ $a > b$ ” express. This is the “noetic” concept of meaning analyzed in the *Logical Investigations*. On the other hand, the (noematic) meaning is the object-about (*Gegenstand-worüber*) in the way it is intended: the two states of affairs  $a > b$  and  $b < a$  correspond to two different noematic meanings. Such meanings in different ways intend the very same quantitative situation that the two objects— $a$  and  $b$ —found. In Hua XXVI Husserl characterizes noetic meaning with the attributes “phansisch” or “phanseologisch” and the noematic meaning with the attributes “ontisch” or “phänomenologisch”. These expressions recur in Hua XL also (cf. text no. 8, p. 160 and text no. 14, p. 291).

The second part of Hua XL deals mainly with the implications of this new semantic conception. First of all, Husserl’s results are relevant not only for relational sentences, but also for sentences with monadic predicates. A reader of the *Logical Investigations* might understand states of affairs as mereological wholes containing a founding object *as a proper part* within themselves.<sup>7</sup> After identifying noematic meaning as an element distinct from the object-about, such an interpretation is no longer admissible. One and the same object-about can be given

<sup>5</sup> Note that the following argumentation is *not* restricted to the above-mentioned examples, as every relation implies a converse one. This is a point that Husserl himself states very clearly in Hua XL: “[t]o every relational states of affairs a converse, a converse state of affairs corresponds” (“Jedem relationellen Sachverhalt [...] entspricht eine Umkehrung, ein umgekehrter Sachverhalt”), p. 203.

<sup>6</sup> “Beiderseits haben wir verschiedene Subjekte und verschiedene Prädikate, wir haben also [...] verschiedene Sachverhalte, aber die Sachlage ist dieselbe.”

<sup>7</sup> The presumption of this interpretation derives from the fact that Husserl rejects the idea that there are non-existing objects. In doing this, he avoids the (Meinongian) problem of existing (or “obtaining”) states of affairs founded by non-existing objects, which impedes every attempt to define the unity and structure of the state of affairs by recurring to mereological means, since no existing entity can contain a non-existing item as a proper part. See Salice (2009), where this issue is examined with regard to the thinking of Meinong and Adolf Reinach.

in different ways, and these are different noematic meanings to which different states of affairs correspond. For instance, the state of affairs being equilateral of the equilateral triangle is different from the state of affairs being equilateral of the equiangular triangle, even if they are equivalent (just as  $a > b$  und  $b < a$  are distinct, but still equivalent states of affairs). But if both states of affairs are different items, then the triangle (as ideal object) is no longer a *part* of these entities. Though this yields the question of how states of affairs are related to objects-about—unanswered in the manuscripts—it helps Husserl to deal with other problems.

One such problem discussed in Hua XL concerns the reference of analytic sentences. For instance, the sentence “the round square is round” seems to be true in virtue of its analyticity even though no round square exists. We need not recapitulate Husserl’s contribution to the discussion about empty terms, but his reflections on this matter during 1908 (cf. text no. 16, pp. 316–330) show some new facets. Here Husserl argues that a judgment like “the round square is round” is without object (*gegenstandslos*), since no subject-about (*Subjekt-worüber*), i.e., no round square, exists. This argument conforms to what he already taught in his *Review* of Kazimir Twardowski in 1894 (cf. Hua XXII, pp. 349–356). But in the manuscript he improves his position by adding that the proposition expressed by that sentence *refers to a state of affairs* (cf. p. 322), which is qualified as an “analytic” state of affairs (p. 327). Since the object-about is no longer considered as a proper part of the state of affairs, Husserl can now assert the existence of such an “analytic” state of affairs (and justify the truth of the corresponding proposition) without committing himself to the self-contradictory assumption that non-existing objects constitute states of affairs (and, hence, exist).

Other problems discussed in the last part of the volume are the correlation between pure logic and formal ontology (cf. texts nos. 8 and 9), the constitution of objects-about through so-called *Untersetzungen* (*suppositions*) and their connection with judgment (texts nos. 12 and 13), and the relation between judgment and intuition or perception (discussed in the last manuscripts of the volume). Concerning the first issue, Husserl already stated in the last paragraphs of his “Prolegomena to Pure Logic” that the relation between truths and states of affairs is a correlative one. This implies that the (formal) laws regulating truths and the (formal) laws regulating facts have to be correlative too. Despite this affirmation, in 1900 Husserl provided no further account of such a correlation. This topic is tackled in the manuscripts. Interestingly, Husserl asserts there that the law of contradiction holds between propositions and not between states of affairs, as there are false propositions, but there are no non-existing states of affairs (cf. pp. 151–156). At the same time, however, he affirms (cf. p. 168) that the syllogism of the first figure *Barbara* can be formulated in truth-functional terms (and so it holds for propositions), but also in ontological terms (and hence holds for states of affairs too). Furthermore, after the distinction between states of affairs and objects-about, Husserl has to deal with the problem concerning those acts able to grasp such objects-about. They belong to a specific kind of objectifying acts (called “*Untersetzungen*”), which can be either simple (*schlicht*) or founded (*fundiert*), either positing (*setzend*) or not positing (*nicht setzend*) according to the kind of objects-about they face and the attitude with

which they are grasped. The reflection about suppositions, as well as the discussion of deictic judgments and perceptive intuition in texts no. 18 and 19, fall under the more general problem regarding the relations of judgments and presentations.

In conclusion we would like to stress that Husserl's conceptual clarification of judgment is not a mere *analysis* in the literal sense of the word: the building blocks of the judgmental formation are not simply distinguished and juxtaposed. The manuscripts show, rather, that the act-phenomenological level concerned with the essential structure of the judgmental act cannot be detached from the ontology of states of affairs and from the logic of propositions, so that every change in the conceptual geography at one level has theoretical consequences in the adjacent one. This is probably one of the reasons why, over the years, Husserl constantly discussed the same problem from different perspectives. Thus, any adequate reconstruction of Husserl's theory of judgment should consider this level of complexity. In this sense, Hua XL is a valuable benchmark for all attempts at *historical* reconstruction, and from this point of view Rollinger's introduction to the volume provides very good access to the whole thematic. But this book is thus also a valuable aid for all those interested in Husserl's theses from a *systematic* point of view. On the one hand, problems left open or even untouched in Husserl's published works can now be discussed in the light of these manuscripts. On the other, Husserl's investigations can contribute importantly to contemporary debates by pointing out the close interwovenness of the different judgmental domains.

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